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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/27/2018
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [BO](#)
SUBJECT: RUMORED S-300 SALE TO IRAN UNLIKELY

Classified By: Charge Jonathan Moore for reason 1.4 (d).

[11](#). (U) This message has been cleared by the Minsk DATT.

Summary

[12](#). (C) The GOB denied reports that it plans to sell an S-300 surface-to-air missile to Iran. A correspondent covering the defense industry also found such a deal highly unlikely, although he suggested Belarus could sell Iran older missile systems. End summary.

GOB Denies Rumor of S-300 Sale

[13](#). (U) On January 17, "Jane's Defense Weekly" reported that Belarus would sell an S-300 surface-to-air missile complex (SAM) to Iran for USD 140 million. On January 18, a spokesperson for the Security Council of Belarus said there was no basis for the story.

Defense Industry Expert Discounts S-300 Sale as Rumor

[14](#). (C) Aleksandr Alesin, a correspondent for the independent weekly "Belarusy i rynok" who covers the defense industry, told Pol/Econ Deputy Chief that he considered the story an unfounded rumor. Most importantly, according to Alesin, Belarus does not own the S-300, but merely leased it from Russia for USD 30 million. A transfer to Iran could not take place without Russia quickly learning of the deal and damage to the bilateral military relationship would ensue. Alesin believed the matter would rise to the level of Putin's interest. As Lukashenko had lobbied hard to obtain the S-300, breaking the terms of use would prove especially damaging.

[15](#). (C) Alesin said rumors of the S-300 sale pop up on an almost annual basis. He considered such a sale possible, provided Russia gave permission, only once Belarus obtained the next version of SAM, the S-400. Although Russia announced Belarus would receive the system on a priority basis in 2009, Alesin believes it will not become available until 2012.

Sale of Less Advanced SAMs Possible

[16](#). (C) Alesin noted that Belarus could conceivably sell less advanced systems to Iran, including the S-125 Pechora 2, 2A or 2M. On the other hand, Alesin believed Belarus would not

sell S-200 SAMs. He said Belarus had recently taken S-200s out of reserve status and put them into service with two divisions. Turning around and selling them abroad would contradict this current tendency to improve air defenses.

Comment

[17](#). (C) Post agrees with Alesin that the sale of the S-300 systems currently operated by Belarus makes little sense. The Belarusian military industrial complex depends on a good working relationship with Russia, which could be severely damaged by an illicit sale. Russia's deliberate use of Belarus as a transit country would fool few, and as Alesin pointed out, Russia has already openly sold SAMs to Iran.
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